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ABSTRACT

The paper defines action research and what conception of theory might best contribute to its development. Action research is a continuous conscious attempt to seek increased meaning and direction in a teacher's relationship with students. Practical inquiry of teachers with their students is a form of educational research. A Masters Degree Program in Instructional Leadership in which students pursue an internship instead of a formal thesis is described. The internship involves students in proposing and implementing a change in their own teaching situation. A review of curriculum research examines Dewey's practical inquiry approach and the more formalized experimental studies promoted by Thorndike, Cattell, and others. Action research theory is summarized in several points, among them that action research is a spirit of inquiry that strives for meaning and direction in the educative action of teachers, learners, and those who help them. (DWH)

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Sources of a Theory of Action Research in Progressive Education

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If one agrees to participate in a symposium entitled "Toward a Theory of Action Research," it is probably safe to say that he or she believes that a theory of action research is possible. Likewise, it is tacitly assumed that such a theory is desirable. Given these two assumptions, we asked what such a theory might look like. Such was our asking, primarily, because we want to know what compelled us to discuss a theory of action research while we were uncertain what action research was in the first place.

Would a theory of action research be descriptive theory patterned after a positivist or behaviorist interpretation of natural sciences such as one finds in the work of George Beauchamp (1982), who draws upon Kerlinger's conception that "theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena" (Kerlinger, 1973, p.9)? Or might a theory of action research be more akin to normative or prescriptive theory characterized by Paul Hirst as "theory in which principles, stating what ought to be done in a range of practical activities, are formulated and justified" (Hirst, 1966, p.55)? Or does a theory of action research move beyond these two forms of theory that dominate theoretical discourse in education? It is the purpose of this paper, then, to address the problem of what action research is and what conception of theory might best contribute to its development.

In an attempt to respond defensibly to this purpose, we turned first to our experience as teachers, second to our work as teacher educators, and third to curriculum history.

Sources in Personal Teaching Experience

Introspectively, we asked: During our ten years of public school teaching were we ever engaged in action research? Our initial response was to think about formal involvement in projects labeled action research. Our answer to this was no. If we thought about the question informally, however, our answer was a categorical yes. A prime motivator for our choice to be involved in teaching was to think seriously about the question: What kind of knowledge and experiences should children and the youth have if they are to grow well and lead good lives? The vagueness of such terms as "grow well," "good lives," and even "knowledge" and "experiences" leads inevitably into the deepest recesses of philosophy. To seek to give such terms meaning in our interaction with the lives of students is one of the most fundamental forms of inquiry we have ever experienced. If this is not action research, then action research bypasses the essence of inquiry inspired by the act of teaching.

To teach seriously is to continuously ask oneself fundamental questions about what one is doing, and why one is doing it. To address the Spencerian question (Spencer, 1861) of what knowledge is of the most worth is to invoke philosophical questions that parallel perennial categories of philosophical inquiry. Let us briefly reflect on these questions.

Metaphysics. To teach something implies an interpretation of it, a conception of reality that probes natural phenomena and beyond as well. What kind of orientations to the world, what conceptions of it, best serve the students we teach? How can we take for granted the passing on of subject matter distilled for classroom distribution when that knowledge itself is highly problematic and continuously changing?

Ontology. What does it mean to be or to exist in the world? How does one come to grips with the essence of oneself and the world? How should one pursue the quest for fundamental principles? Such questions, it seemed to us, are the ground of education, and therefore necessary to the reflection of those who teach.

Epistemology. What is the nature of knowledge and the knowing process? No question seems more central to curriculum and teaching than this. How can one presume to teach if one has not addressed the relative value of alternative epistemological bases such as: experience, authority, science, revelation, intuition, and the like?

Axiology. What is valuable? Nearly every curriculum and teaching decision is couched in the usually taken-for-granted assumption that certain kinds of experience or knowledge are valuable. To what extent is the valuable reflected by desire as contrasted with notions of what ought to be desirable?

Ethics. What is goodness? What does it mean to be good, to treat others with goodness, to lead a good life? How do knowledge and experience deemed worthwhile contribute to a better quality of life? If that is not their purpose, what is the benefit of knowledge and experience advocated by curriculum?

Politics. What socio-political arrangements promote a life worth leading? What kind of life is promoted by current socio-political arrangements? Given the current arrangements, is it possible to provide curricula and teaching that contribute to worthwhile living?

Aesthetics. What kinds of patterns can I perceive in my life as a teacher? In my teaching situation and in that of my students? How can I develop the connoisseurship to distinguish beauty in such patterns (i.e., the

critical capacity to appreciate educative experience when it occurs, and the basis for helping it occur)?

Logic. What is defensible reason? What forms of induction, deduction, and dialectic can legitimately be used to justify what I do as a teacher, and what I ask my students to do?

These are samples of the kinds of overarching questions that interpenetrated our lives as teachers. It was evident to us that our lives as teachers were interwoven with our lives as human beings, and that reflective teaching went hand-in-hand with reflectiveness about our personal living.

Thus, the most meaningful image of action research derived from our teaching is a continuous, conscious attempt to seek increased meaning and direction in our lives with students, and in our own personal lives. It is difficult to conceive of a theory for this notion of action research, especially a conventional prescriptive or descriptive theory.

Is there any kind of theory that can capture or contribute to the act of teacher reflectivity? To some extent the perennial philosophical topics noted above might be considered tenets of a theory of action research. However, they would not serve in that capacity primarily as a means to acquire or accept the answers provided by noted philosophers or schools of philosophic thought; instead, they serve as sign posts on life's journey that stimulate a broad array of questions to be asked and pondered.

Yet, our lives as teachers with students brought a kind of theory that ran deeper within us than can be conveyed by a mere cataloging of perennial philosophic questions. Teaching, like parenting, is a process of helping others become better oriented to the world. Reflection on what is meant by "bet-

ter oriented," we now conclude, was an organizing center (to use the curriculum term developed by Virgil Herrick, 1965) that enabled us to have a job and simultaneously continue to pursue our self-education. Ultimately, it turned out not to be as self-centered as this; helping others grow and self-development became mutually desirable. Without realizing it at the time, our choice to teach elementary school students enabled us to remain generalists in pursuit of a liberal education, instead of specialists who would be required to "divide the seamless coat of learning" (to use Whitehead's, 1929, elegant phrase).

Were we asked as teachers to write or discuss the theory that guided our teaching, we may have tried to explicate it, but we would have believed it an impossible task. The theory that guided our reflection as teachers, our theory of action research, is deeply embedded within the repertoire of thoughts, feelings, experiences, images, dreams, hopes, fears, collective unconscious, and whatever else makes up the mind, body, and/or spirit that we are. What's more, this repertoire is always changing. It is as if our organism (or person) itself is a theory in a continuous state of revision, and the action that we live is practice.

This notion of theory and practice is so expansive that a theory of action research becomes a theory of living educationally. Thus, it becomes too unwieldy to manage with descriptive or prescriptive theory. If there is to be a theory of action research, it is within the personal constructs that reside in each teacher. Thus, those who want to inspire action research must try to exemplify the process of reflecting on sources of meaning and direction in their own lives as they encourage others to do likewise.

Sources From Teacher Education

As teacher educators, we find that many teachers engage in the kind of action research that we discovered as teachers, but they are very reluctant to consider it research or even education. We find ourselves encouraging teachers to ask why they do what they do with students. We encourage them to think about what they might do otherwise, and why doing so might improve the quality of educational life for their students.

In our Masters Degree Program in Instructional Leadership, students pursue an internship instead of formal thesis. The internship involves students in proposing and carrying out a change in their own teaching situation. Examples of practical projects over the past five years deal with a variety of subject areas and types of learning situations. One junior high school teacher observed the discipline problems caused by a number of alienated students, and developed a program to regenerate their interest in education by meeting regularly with them at lunch hour, during free periods, and by taking them on weekend excursions. An industrial arts teacher who had significant expertise in stained glass techniques, wondered if teachers would treat "slow learners" in his school differently if they could feel similar difficulty in learning subject matter; therefore, he developed a class in which he taught stained glass work to teachers and "slow learners" and "problem students." The project resulted in more empathic treatment of students by these teachers. A teacher in a school for high risk delinquency-prone students, saw teachers mired in traditional subject matter, and instituted discussion groups in which they could address fundamental questions about the knowledge and experiences most worthwhile to these students. An instructor for a Chicago-based student

teaching program for a consortium of colleges from rural areas in neighboring states, perceived an emptiness in student experience with urban and global problems. She developed such experiences, and designed a conference to generate awareness in these areas. A band directer hypothesized that a lack of interest among some of his students might be the result of not knowing much about their lives. He visited the homes of these students and wrote literary criticism about the informal curriculum of their home life; the students' interest generally improved in both band and school. An experienced substitute teacher who had learned the ropes of substituting in a host of very challenging Chicago inner-city schools is currently preparing a book to facilitate the entry and adjustment of less experienced substitute teachers. Each of these teachers, and others who have completed the program, not only developed technical solutions, but engaged in fundamental reflection about what students needed, and in imaginative consideration of possibilities and consequences. This, we assert, is a form of action research that needs to be more fully recognized.

The conduct of this internship strives toward practical inquiry as characterized by Schwab (1970, 1971, 1973, 1983, and Schubert, 1980b) in his essays on practical inquiry. Teachers focus on a problem or need in their educational situation. They engage in deliberation with an advisor from the university, an adjunct advisor from their school (department chairperson, supervisor, principal, etc.), and fellow graduate students who are pursuing their own internships for three consecutive academic quarters. In contrast to the formal thesis which usually fits Schwab's characterization of <u>theoretic</u> inquiry, the internship illustrates <u>practical</u> inquiry. The problem source of

practical inquiry resides in an actual state of affairs, rather than in an abstract agglomeration in the researcher's mind derived from an array of non-comparable situations. The method of practical inquiry is interaction with problematic phenomena rather than detached induction upon it; and the subject matter derived from practical inquiry is situational insight rather than highly generalized laws of educational behavior. Since searching for the latter is to seek the will-o'-the-wisp, the end of practical inquiry is decision and action rather than knowledge qua knowledge (somewhat cynically, qua publication).

The teachers draw eclectically upon knowledge acquired in courses and readings; they attempt to apply such knowledge to their problems and needs by matching theories to fit situations, by tailoring theories to fit the needs of situations, and by inventing novel solutions to aspects of problems that are unique. In order to do so, they strive to analyze the mutual consequences of classroom common places (teachers, learners, subject matter, and milieu) upon one another.

A reasonable criticism to raise to this position applied as a theory of action research is: what differentiates practical inquiry from mere technical problem-solving and infuses within it a sense of meaning and direction? As Connelly (1983) reminds us, one should not read Schwab's practical without realizing that he accepts eros, the driving force of life that aspires to goodness, as unified with truly educative inquiry (Schwab, 1954).

Unfortunately, a great many who clearly exhibit practical inquiry in their lives with students, have learned not to regard that inquiry as an acceptable form of educational research. Research, they have been taught,

involves problems abstracted from realities that they encounter, proceeds by detached pseudo-objective induction, must result in highly generalized claims, and should be rendered public in a form that resembles research papers. In short, teachers learn when they return to graduate school that the kind of research (personal reflection and practical problem-solving) that gives meaning and direction to their own lives is a lower order of inquiry, unworthy to tread the halls of academe. Why should this be so? Need it be so? Are there alternatives? We suggest that precedent exists in progressive education literature that recognizes as research the inquiry teachers do as they seek meaning and direction in their lives with students.

Precedent in Curriculum History

The history of curriculum in the twentieth century (Schubert, 1980a, 1982) can be read as a debate over the character of inquiry that guides education. No one spoke more poignantly to this issue than John Dewey, from both his position as educational theorist and as eminent philosopher. It was a Dewey in his thirties who saw the classical curriculum of the turn of the century (supported by William Torrey Harris) and its semi-classical variations (supported by the Committees of Ten and Fifteen in the late 1890's) face unrelenting challenges by developmentalists exemplified by G. Stanley Hall who favored child study, by social meliorists whose goal was exemplified by Lester Frank Ward who advocated social improvement through education in contrast to Spencer's social Darwinism, and by the application of the empirical survey and business efficiency methods of Joseph Mayer Rice to call for a carefully monitored and controlled curriculum (Kliebard, 1982).

Twenty years later when emulators of Rice combined with descendants of Wilhelm Wundt (such as E.L. Thorndike, C.H. Judd, and Franklin Bobbitt) touted a curriculum built on an interpretation of science they thought reflected inquiry in natural sciences, it was Dewey who brought a different interpretation of science that spawned the progressive education movement in the United States. These two divergent orientations to curriculum research, and especially the many varieties of each, were archetypical of the theoretic vis-a-vis practical distinction drawn by Schwab in the 1970's. Practical inquiry heralded by Dewey as instrumental in experiential settings sharply contrasts with the formalized experimental, quasi-experimental, and survey studies promoted by Thorndike, Cattell, Judd, Bobbitt, Charters, and a flock of zealots mesmerized by measurement techniques.

Despite these vast differences, Dewey was mysteriously adopted as a father of both groups. Perhaps, some of this mystery can be explained by the need for unity in the still embryonic curriculum field, which seemed on the brink of disintegration impelled by an overabundance of variety. This possibility is revealed in the Twenty-Sixth Yearbook of the National Society For The Study of Education (Rugg, 1927), the result of nearly three years of deliberation. Under the leadership of Harold Rugg, twelve of the most noted and differently oriented curriculum scholars met to determine if some kind of consensus could be reached. The result was eighteen questions, a composite statement of seventeen pages, a good deal of compromise, and supplementary (minority opinion) statements by each of the participants comprising 116 pages. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that all of this was followed by twenty-four pages of quotations selected from John Dewey's written statements

on curriculum. Despite intense disagreements between one another, the likes of William C. Bagley, Franklin Bobbitt, Frederick Bonser, W.W. Charters, George S. Counts, Stuart Courtis, Ernest Horn, Charles H. Judd, Frederick Kelly, William H. Kilpatrick, Harold Rugg, and George A. Works all contributed to a book that regarded Dewey as an exemplar of curricular thought.

Dewey continued as a recognized paragon of curriculum thought over the years, although the character of theory, practice, and research of those who expressed high esteem for his contributions often blatantly contradicted one another and Dewey. This is in few places more obvious than in Dewey's Sources of a Science of Education (1929), which for over five decades was a source of justification for almost any variety of educational research. Despite the claims of formalistic, rule-bound, technical, social behaviorist researchers in education, Dewey clearly sees the essence of educational research in the practical inquiry of teachers. He asserts that "if . . . teachers are mainly channels of reception and transmission, the conclusions of science will be badly deflected and distorted before they get into the minds of pupils . . . this state of affairs is a chief cause for the tendency . . . to convert scientific findings into recipes to be followed." (Dewey, 1929, p. 47). Dewey's general conclusion to the same book is that "the sources of educational science are any portions of ascertained knowledge that enter into the heart, head, and hands of educators, and which, by entering in, render the performance of the educational function more enlightened, more humane, more truly educational than it was before. But there is no way to discover what is 'more truly educational' except by the continuation of the educational act itself. The discovery is never made; it is always making." (Dewey, 1929, p. 76-77).

Here is unmistakably a vision of the teacher continuously pursuing self-education in the course of the act of teaching.

It is our contention that the widespread positive regard extended to Dewey's work in curriculum circles was done to sustain the existence of a field threatened by extinction due to excess diversity. In fact, the lack of practice of these Deweyan ideals of research was due to what Dewey called, "The human desire to be an 'authority' and to control the activities of others" (1929, p. 47). In order to understand Dewey as the central force in action research, we must move more broadly to his philosophy of inquiry wherein lies the link between education and democracy, between the individual and the collective.

The appearance of his classic Logic, The Theory of Inquiry in 1938 spurred much criticism as well as praise in philosophical circles unlike the educational community's response to The Sources of a Science of Education nine years earlier. Idealists, realists, and formal logicians looked askance at Dewey's position that logic is inquiry itself rendered available in theoretic form. In other words, logic is theory about the ways in which people solve problems. It is from this orientation to the meaning of logic that Dewey refined and elaborated the five stages in the process of inquiry or problem-solving:

1. The experience of an indeterminate situation, i,e., disrupted equilibrium between organism and environment;
2. The conversion of the indeterminate situation from a mere dilemma to a problem capable of articulation;

3. The establishment of hypotheses along with broadly anticipated consequences of action upon them;

4. The elaboration and testing of the hypotheses; and

5. The reetablishment of a determinate situation (Dewey 1910 and 1938).

While Dewey's treatment of logic as inquiry embedded in human action is most fully developed in Logic, The Theory of Inquiry, his thought on the matter traces back with remarkable consistency thirty-five years to Studies in Logical Theory (Dewey, et al., 1903) and in 1916 to Essays in Experimental Logic (Dewey, 1916a). It was in his 1910 book How We Think that he provided a less technical account of these notions that reached educators. Great enough was the influence of this book on curriculum thought that in a poll of the Professors of Curriculum How We Think was among five of Dewey's works listed as one of the 29 most important curriculum classics (Fraley, 1981, p. 223-225).

Dewey's other major writings on education also point to the inseparable link between democratic action and the method of inquiry. In the School and Society (1900), Dewey drew upon his Laboratory School experience at the University of Chicago to argue that the school must be an embryonic community meaningfully connected with both the lives of individuals who make up the school and the larger society surrounding the school. In The Child and the Curriculum (1902) Dewey set forth his notion of the experimental nature of teaching which consists of a process of enabling children to engage in dialogue about their interests, probe to deeper and broader human interests that lie below daily caprice, and finally, perceive the relevance of disciplinary knowledge accumulated by the human race to their own concerns. This is often

referred to as moving from the psychological to the logical. The connections between society, the individual, and knowledge as bases for the evolution of education and democracy were built more solidly in Dewey's Democracy and Education (1916). Here education is treated as individual inquiry or problem-solving enhanced by attention to and interaction with the social milieu in which one is embedded. Educative inquiry attends to the multiplicity of overt and covert consequences of one's decision and action on the context it influences. Since it is impossible for any one person to attend to a full range of consequences, the value of democratic interaction is invoked to illuminate the mutual impact that proposed action might have and actual action has.

This is a job of teachers whose action research is not to establish objectives, control their implementation, and measure the results, but to engage their students in the process of reconstructing meaning and direction. Such teachers see their work as continuous inquiry on research that asks, "What is most worthwhile to do?" But they alone don't ask the question and attempt to answer it, nor do they primarily turn to outside experts. Instead, this question becomes the heart of the curriculum. The curriculum becomes a process of students and teachers engaged together in the continuous refinement of aims, not dry and brittle aims to be written in filed-away curriculum guides, but aims that guide living together and meaning experienced. Of aims or objectives Dewey reminds us that "education is autonomous and should be free to determine its own ends.... Until educators get the independence and courage to insist that educational aims are to be formed as well as executed within the educative process, they will not come to consciousness of their own

function. Others will then have no great respect for educators because educators do not respect their own social place and work. . . . For education is itself a process of discovering what values are worthwhile and are to be persued as objectives. To see what is going on and to observe the results of what goes on so as to see their further consequences in the process of growth . . . is the only way in which the value of what takes place can be judged" (Dewey, 1929, p. 74-75).

Here, then, we return to action research as a building of philosophical assumptions or principles that guide one's life. This is the process that occurs in the midst of other lives (those of students) especially for teachers, and therefore must be pursued with others in a democratization of inquiry. Dewey continues, "Each day of teaching ought to enable a teacher to revise and better in some respect the objectives aimed at in previous work. . . . Education is a mode of life, of action. (It) renders those who engage in the act more intelligent, more thoughtful, more aware of what they are about" (Dewey, 1929, p. 75-76).

There is a history of action research that followed Dewey and serves as important footnotes on the characterization he expressed; yet, there are gross misinterpretations in which his proposals were mechanized and debilitated.

The well-known Eight Year Study (Aikin, 1942) from 1932-1940, was an attempt by the Progressive Education Association to study and demonstrate the value of progressive over traditional education. Traditionalists and social behaviorists to this day are reluctant to accept the findings that students from the thirty experimental school systems equaled or exceeded students from traditional high schools on a variety of measures of success in college. Such

measures dealt not only with academic performance but social adjustment, self-concept, attitude, leadership, extra-curricular activities, self-direction, and the like. Critics, who exemplify a non-Deweyan conception of action research, criticize the lack of uniform pre-specified treatment. An operational definition of progressive education would, however, be its own anathema; it would prevent continuous reconstruction of purpose and meaning to meet situational needs. Critics object also to the matched pairs research design, as compared with random sampling techniques that would be used today, on the grounds that it is quite impossible to match students on all influential characteristics. The point that is missed by many critics, however, is that they look for research in the design for comparison of experimental and control groups, while experientialists or progressives see research as the reflective action of teachers who thoughtfully questioned and revised the content of their educative interaction with students. In reflecting on his experience as Evaluation Director for the Eight Year Study, Ralph Tyler (1980) recognizes teacher reflection during workshops as a fundamental form of curriculum inquiry or research.

Published in 1953 Stephen M. Corey's book, Action Research to Improve School Practices, was influenced by the Eight Year Study and soon became something of a bible of the action research movement. It is clear that Corey drew heavily upon Dewey (1910, 1916, 1929, 1938) and integrated this with the socio-psychological field theory of Kurt Lewin (1948) on the resolution of social conflicts. Interestingly, the first two chapters of Corey's book read like a practitioner-oriented rendition of Schwab's work on practical research of twenty years later, but example studies included by Corey move quickly to

the technical. They often tend to leave behind the reflectivness of teachers as a legitimate form of action research. L. Thomas Hopkins (1954) vigorously points this out, calls for a form of research that is one and the same as inquiry that brings growth of self and others, and warns prophetically against mechanizing it.

Action research subsequently made its way into synoptic curriculum books used to orient curriculum workers to the curriculum field in the late 1950s and 1960s; and lost much of its spontaneity and vitality. Those who taught action research in teachers colleges and universities began to encourage teachers to do research projects in their classrooms. They had them do mini-studies using statistical research, sometimes even using sampling techniques that were designed for much larger populations.

These professors soon lamented the fact that teachers lacked interest in conducting such research and did not have the methodological sophistication to do sound action research studies.

What they failed to realize was that good teachers did research on their students, but it was practical inquiry and did not wear the garb of social behaviorist research papers. With the influx of neo-positivist social science researchers in post-Sputnik curriculum reform of the late 1950s and the 1960s, the idea of thoughtful problem-solvers (i.e., practical inquirers) was dumped on the scrapheap of inert people in education along with "armchair philosophers." And it was kept there quite securely during the 1960s and early 1970s when researchers had to submit quantitative evidence of their accountability during the golden age of educational finding. Even educational philosophers and historians complied with social behaviorist dictates as whole departments

of educational foundations metamorphized into departments of educational policy analysis.

Only in the past ten to fifteen years has the spirit of a Deweyan interpretation of action research rekindled. The teacher-as-researcher movement in England initiated by Lawrence Stenhouse and others (Stenhouse, 1975; May, 1982 and Skilbeck, 1983) acknowledges serious teacher reflection on their own work as a viable form of research. Other examples are found among the variety of forms of qualitative research and evaluation such as work patterned after artistic and literary criticism as in cases presented by Eisner (1979) and Willis (1978), as well as forms of responsive evaluation originated by Stake and explicated by Guba and Lincoln (1983). Autobiographical research by Pinar (1980) and Grumet (1980) also illustrates a kind of self-analysis that educators might use for personal growth. Emancipatory pedagogy such as that which transpired in Freire's (1970) dialogic encounters with Brazilian peasants, and more recently the search for forms of resistance to domination by teachers and students by Giroux (1983), Apple (1982), and Apple and Weis (1983).

In such a diverse literature as this, we can see a central thread: the teacher who becomes more reflective, more wide-awake, more interested in questioning the taken-for-granted. We see this too, in the work of Max van Manen (e.g., 1982) and in the new journal, Phenomenology and Pedagogy, which he edits. We see it as well in various attempts at collaborative research when collaboration is not just between researchers and school administrators for the purpose of rubber stamping programs, but when it involves researchers and teachers in dialogue about the situation of the teacher with the assumption that both teachers and researchers can learn.

Conclusion

Teachers who embark on a path of doing research that is inquiry into fundamental concerns that they have about their own meaning and direction are doing what gave us satisfaction and sense of purpose as teachers. Moreover, as teacher educators we conclude that many teachers taste benefits of this kind of research in the privacy of their own classrooms. They become disenchanted in graduate school when they are given the message that this inquiry is not worthy of the label research. On the contrary, they relish the opportunity to engage in dialogue with other educators (university faculty and other teachers) about problems in their own situation. We suggest that the seriousness, depth, and consequences of such dialogue exceed that of many research papers and clearly should be regarded as defensible action research. This embraces the perennial philosophic questions set forth earlier in this paper, and we suggest it is what Dewey had in mind when he wrote of the teacher's contribution to educational research.

Summarily, we offer the following points drawn from our own teaching experience, our work as teacher educators, and our brief historical review of literature that bears on action research:

1. Action research should include the serious reflection that teachers pursue as they work with students.
2. Such reflection deals with practical problems encountered in the day-to-day teaching situation.
3. Resolution of these practical problems requires reflection on fundamental philosophical problems.

4. Resolution also involves careful attention to consequences which teachers in complex social situations (such as classrooms) cannot do alone.
5. Thus, the classroom itself (students as well as teachers) must address questions about meaning and direction such as: What knowledge and experiences are worthwhile? What kind of a life is good to lead? Why? How can it be created?
6. This, we feel, is a position consistent with Dewey, the inquiry of teachers in the Eight Year Study, and several contemporary modes of research.
7. A theory of action research, interpreted thusly, does not fit conventional descriptive or prescriptive modes. It is a spirit of inquiry that strives for meaning and direction in the educative action of teachers, learners, and those who help them.

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